



House of Commons  
Education Committee

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# Holocaust education: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2015–16

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Fourth Special Report of Session  
2015–16

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## The Education Committee

The Education Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Education and its associated public bodies.

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### Powers

The committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publications

Committee reports are published on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Richard Ward (Clerk), Kevin Maddison (Second Clerk), Anna Connell-Smith (Committee Specialist), Jack Dent (Inquiry Manager), Jonathan Arkless (Senior Committee Assistant), Simon Armitage (Committee Assistant), and Gary Calder (Media Officer).

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Education Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 1376; the Committee's email address is [educom@parliament.uk](mailto:educom@parliament.uk).

## Fourth Special Report

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The Education Committee reported to the House on *Holocaust education* ([HC 480](#)), in its Second Report of Session 2015–16 on 24 January 2016. The Government's response was received on 24 March 2016 and is appended to this report.

In the Government's response, the Committee's recommendations appear in **bold text** while the Government's responses are in plain text.

## Appendix: Government response

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### Introduction

The government welcomes the Committee's report into Holocaust education. The government believes that every young person should be taught the history of the Holocaust and the lessons it teaches today, and as such, it is important to ensure that it is taught well. In recognition of its significance, the Holocaust is the only historic event which is compulsory within the national curriculum for history. The government is committed to continuing to support and fund Holocaust education.

### Responses to individual conclusions and recommendations

1. **We have received a wealth of written evidence attesting to the importance of high-quality Holocaust education. This requires a detailed knowledge of the subject including when, why, where and who as well as an understanding of the roles of perpetrator, victim, bystander and rescuer. We have heard about examples of inspiring education which take students well beyond the classroom. At its best, Holocaust education can lead students towards being active and informed citizens. (Paragraph 10); and**
2. **The status of the Holocaust within the National Curriculum creates demand for high quality teacher training above and beyond the training available for discretionary topics. (Paragraph 14)**

It is important that teachers are properly equipped to teach about the sensitive subject of the Holocaust, and to this end, the government has funded the UCL Institute of Education's Centre for Holocaust Education (CfHE) (originally known as the Holocaust Education Development Programme) since 2008. The funding, which is matched by the Pears Foundation, was doubled to £500,000 from 2013-14.

The key aim of the Centre for Holocaust Education is to help ensure teachers have access to the training and resources they need to deliver effective Holocaust education. The work of the Centre is underpinned by school-based research, and in 2009 it produced the first national empirical portrait of the attitudes of teachers in schools in England to teaching about the Holocaust (based on the responses of more than 2,000 teachers). This enabled it to develop the resources and tailor the training that was needed to support teachers in this area.

There are five key aspects to the Centre for Holocaust Education's teacher education programme. These are:

- an Initial Teacher Education programme typically delivered as a one-day course in universities and Initial Teacher Education institutions across England;
- a continuing professional development programme for practising teachers offered as a series of one day, weekend, or evening courses in schools or conference venues in locations throughout England;
- a fully accredited on-line MA module, the Holocaust in the Curriculum, offered over the course of an academic year;
- a Beacon Schools programme in which Centre staff work with approximately 20 schools a year to deepen understanding, develop and extend school networks and, ultimately, improve teaching; and
- a small but committed number of teachers deepen their knowledge through doctoral studies.

The Centre for Holocaust Education is represented in all of the major routes into teaching, and feedback from attendees of the courses and programmes has been very positive.

To ensure value for money is achieved, as part of the grant funding agreement with the UCL Institute of Education, the Department for Education agrees key performance indicators relating to, for example, the number of teachers upon whom the programmes have impacted. These targets are often exceeded and are reviewed annually. In 2014-15, nearly 1,700 teachers and 640 trainee teachers received training in understanding the significance of teaching about the Holocaust and being equipped with approaches and materials to do so effectively. Over 400 teachers across the country embarked on the core continuing professional development programme. The Initial Teacher Education programme was delivered to 20 Initial Teacher Education providers. 20 new schools participated in the 2014-15 Beacon School programme. For 2015-16, the Centre for Holocaust Education has already exceeded its targets in Initial Teacher Education, and also expects to do so for its continuing professional development activities.

**3. The Department for Education should take steps to support the organisations it funds to deliver Holocaust education to more history teachers. The Department for Education should also consider how the teacher training it funds could be extended to teachers of subjects other than history. (Paragraph 15)**

Whilst teaching the history of the Holocaust is a compulsory part of the history curriculum, there is also scope to teach it as part of other subjects. Research has shown that it is taught in a wide variety of subject areas in addition to history, in particular religious education, English, citizenship and PSHE, as part of schools' wider work to promote fundamental British values.

In financial year 2015-16, as of February 2016, 1,175 teachers had engaged with the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education programme in continuing professional development and Initial Teacher Education. Of these, the clear majority (933, or 79%) are history teachers. However, a significant proportion – just over one-fifth – are teachers of a range of other

subject areas. Of the 242 teachers not teaching history, the largest contingent (105 teachers) teach religious studies, that is, 9% of the total; 72 teach English (6%); 31 teach either science or mathematics (3%); 21 teach music or arts (2%); and 13 teach citizenship (1%).

To reflect the range of mixed subject groups represented on its courses, the Centre for Holocaust Education often put in a Whole School Issues or Professional Studies context, and will continue to develop this approach.

**4. The personal testimony of Holocaust survivors is irreplaceable. Work is underway to preserve the stories of survivors, as well as those written records of people who died during or since the Holocaust. We recognise the current and future role to be played by relatives and descendants of victims of the Holocaust. We hope that the Government will respond favourably to proposals that are made by the Holocaust Commission for preserving Holocaust testimony for future generations, when they are made. (Paragraph 19)**

One of the recommendations of the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission was "*An urgent programme to record and preserve the testimony of British Holocaust survivors and liberators.*" On Holocaust Memorial Day 2015, the Prime Minister announced that he was accepting the recommendations of the Holocaust Commission in full. The United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation was established to take forward and implement the Commission's recommendations. The Foundation made an immediate start, completing a comprehensive audit of British survivor and camp liberator testimony, working with partners across the world. This has enabled assessment of how existing recordings should be preserved and is ensuring effective targeting of resources.

The United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation secured £1.4 million from the Department for Communities and Local Government and by working with BAFTA-winning British company Atlantic Productions, 40 testimonies have now been recorded. By the time the project is complete (around September 2016) over 100 testimonies will have been recorded.

A huge amount of research and testing has gone into developing the right technical setup to ensure the testimonies can be future-proofed, and the Foundation is also helping to fund the National Holocaust Centre near Newark to capture survivor testimony in a way that could be used interactively. A small number of survivors are recording their answers to over 900 questions, creating a database from which voice recognition technology can allow people to have their questions answered as if speaking directly to a survivor. This will enable people to experience something of the power of speaking with a survivor for generations to come.

The Foundation is also funding The Wiener Library to help accelerate the work on its large collection of written eyewitness testimonies taken in the 1950s and 1960s. As well as making an invaluable collection of testimonies accessible, by digitising now, the Foundation is preventing the content being lost forever, due to the deterioration of the quality of the original documents.

**5. The Government should consider giving more young people the opportunity to visit Auschwitz, preferably through the Lessons from Auschwitz programme. Subsequent visits to other sites might also be encouraged. (Paragraph 21)**

It is important that young people understand the horrors of the Holocaust, and why and how it occurred. One of the ways this is achieved is by the Holocaust Educational Trust's 'Lessons from Auschwitz' (LfA) project, which the government funds. The project started in 1999, and has received government funding since 2006. This enabled it to increase the number of courses on offer and reach a much higher number of pupils and teachers. A further grant of £1.85m for the Holocaust Educational Trust has been awarded for 2016-17. Since 1999 over 28,500 students and teachers have participated in the project from across the UK, of which over 21,000 are from England. In the last financial year, 2014-15, nearly 2,000 students from England took part in the project. Schools can also arrange their own visits to other sites if they choose to do so.

**6. We agree that the teaching of other genocides should not come at the expense of failing to teach the Holocaust. Some of the testimony we have received from witnesses supported the teaching of other genocides following on from the Holocaust. (Paragraph 28)**

The teaching of other genocides and atrocities is an important aspect of young people's understanding of the modern world. One of the key aims of the last review of the national curriculum, which concluded in 2013, was to ensure it reflects the body of essential knowledge which all children should be taught. The new national curriculum, taught from September 2014, gives schools and teachers greater freedom to decide which additional topics they wish to study.

The Royal Wootton Bassett Academy (RWBA) for example, has a whole school, holistic programme of Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education (HGP) that has gained national and international recognition. The programme has played a central role within the curriculum and ethos of the school since 2009, starting with an inaugural Year 9 collapsed timetable Holocaust Day, including the opportunity to hear survivor testimony and a student-led Awareness and Memorial Evening. It has since grown into an initiative committed to exposing the evils of prejudice, injustice and hatred in all its forms whilst celebrating civic values from Years 7-13. RWBA has a long-standing relationship with the UCL IoE's CfHE, including participating in their Beacon Schools project and was among the first schools to pilot and trial CfHE's online Pupil Research. The HGP has incorporated workshops on the genocides in Rwanda, Bosnia and the situation in countries recognised on the Genocide Watch list.

They also have links with organisations such as: the US Holocaust Memorial Museum; the Aegis Trust, which works to prevent genocide and mass atrocities worldwide; and Most Mira – Bridge of Peace, a UK and Bosnian charity working to encourage understanding and tolerance between young people of all backgrounds in the Prijedor area.

**7. A growing number of students are at schools where the Holocaust is not required to be taught by the National Curriculum. While many academies will rightly elect to teach students about the Holocaust, the Government should take steps to ensure that Holocaust education does not become inadvertently patchy. (Paragraph 32)**

Academies are required, like all schools, to teach a broad and balanced curriculum and to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of their pupils. They are accountable to their local communities for the decisions they make. Inspectors assess schools' support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and how this equips them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain. Ofsted has written to inspectors to make them aware of the work schools are doing on Holocaust Education funded by the Department.

HET works with all types of secondary schools, including academies, who take part in their LfA programme. Teachers from academies also take part in the training activities of the CfHE – since 2014 nearly 50% of the Beacon Schools in CfHE's network are academies.

**8. We recognise the importance of ensuring that the Holocaust is taught in sensitive and age-appropriate ways, and conclude that the teaching of the Holocaust would be strengthened by the adoption of a deliberately cross-curricular approach. (Paragraph 36)**

While it is the case that the Holocaust is a compulsory part of the history curriculum in England at key stage 3 (ages 11-14), there is also scope to teach it both earlier within history, in an age-appropriate way, for example if there is a local dimension, or maybe as part of an aspect or theme, or as a turning point in British history. Research has shown that the Holocaust is taught in a wide variety of subject areas in addition to history. There is scope to teach it as part of other subjects such as religious education and English, but it is for teachers to decide whether and how to do this in the most appropriate way. The government supports organisations such as the National Holocaust Centre in Newark and the Wiener Library. The National Holocaust Centre provides a range of facilities for young people of all ages to explore the history and implications of the Holocaust, and the Wiener Library also welcomes visits by teachers and their classes.

CfHE's network of Beacon Schools serve as dynamic hubs co-ordinating a network of local schools, helping them to develop confidence, proficiency and excellence in Holocaust teaching and learning. The Beacon School in Holocaust Education programme helps to develop the leadership potential of school staff. Middle Leaders such as Heads of Department have opportunities for career progression as the Beacon School lead teachers, playing a major role in curriculum and school development.

Each year, lead teachers from 20 schools participate in a fully-funded residential seminar at UCL and a study visit to Warsaw. These Beacon Schools have the opportunity to draw upon UCL resources, expertise and support to develop new Schemes of Work for teaching about the Holocaust, which are shared with other schools in their region. Two of the new Beacon Schools are also Teaching Schools and will form the basis of the continual expansion of UCL's Teaching School network.

By way of example, the Royal Wootton Bassett Academy teaches Holocaust Education through a range of curriculum subjects, in particular history, religious education, sociology, psychology and foreign languages.